

The benefits described in this brochure are part of a comprehensive set of preventive services and screenings covered by Medicare. This brochure provides a basic overview of Medicare's Influenza Vaccine, Pneumococcal Polysaccharide Vaccine (PPV), and Hepatitis B Vaccine benefits.

OVERVIEW – INFLUENZA AND PNEUMOCOCCAL POLYSACCHARIDE VACCINE (PPV)

Influenza, also known as the flu, is a contagious disease that is caused by the influenza virus. It attacks the respiratory tract in humans (nose, throat, and lungs). Influenza is a serious illness that can lead to pneumonia. At least 45,000 Americans die each year from influenza and pneumonia, the sixth leading cause of death in the United States. Ninety percent of these deaths are among people 65 years of age or over.¹ All adults age 65 and older should get both the influenza and pneumococcal vaccinations. Medicare beneficiaries who are under age 65 but have a chronic illness, including heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, or End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) should get the influenza vaccination.

INFLUENZA VACCINE

Risk Factors for Influenza

Medicare provides coverage for the influenza vaccine and its administration for all Medicare beneficiaries regardless of risk for the disease; however, some individuals are at greater risk for contracting influenza. Vaccination is recommended for individuals that fall within one or more of the high risk or priority groups.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) identifies the following individuals as being in a high risk group for serious complications from influenza:

- Individuals aged 65 or older
- Children less than 3 years old
- All women who will be pregnant during the flu season
- Individuals of any age who have certain underlying health conditions such as heart or lung disease, transplant recipients, or individuals with Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS)

ACIP also identifies the following individuals as being in a priority group:

¹The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. 2004. *Fight Flu and Pneumonia* [online]. Baltimore, MD: The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2004 [cited 15 September 2004]. Available from the World Wide Web: (www.medicare.gov/health/fluupdates.asp).

- Residents of nursing homes and long-term care facilities
- Children aged 2 - 18 years old on chronic aspirin therapy
- Health care workers involved in direct patient care
- Out-of-home caregivers and household contacts of children less than 6 months of age or individuals in the high risk groups

Individuals in the following groups should not receive the influenza vaccine without the recommendation of their physicians:

- Individuals with a severe allergy (i.e., anaphylactic allergic reaction) to hens' eggs
- Individuals who previously had onset of Guillain-Barre syndrome during the 6 weeks after receiving the influenza vaccine

COVERAGE INFORMATION FOR INFLUENZA

Coverage of the influenza virus vaccine and its administration was added to the Medicare Program on May 1, 1993. Medicare covers influenza immunizations without regard to whether a beneficiary is at risk or not for the disease.

Medicare generally provides coverage for one influenza vaccine per influenza season. However, Medicare will provide coverage for more than one influenza vaccination per influenza season if it is reasonable and medically necessary.

Coverage of the influenza vaccine is provided as a Medicare Part B benefit. If the beneficiary receives the service from a Medicare-enrolled provider who accepts assignment, the beneficiary will pay nothing (there is no coinsurance or copayment and no deductible for this benefit).

PNEUMOCOCCAL POLYSACCHARIDE VACCINE (PPV)

Risk Factors for Pneumococcal Infection

The CDC identifies the following high priority target groups for the pneumococcal vaccination:

- Individuals age 65 or older
- Individuals with a serious long-term health problem such as heart disease, sickle cell disease, alcoholism, leaks of cerebrospinal fluid, lung disease (not including asthma), diabetes, or liver cirrhosis
- Individuals with a lowered resistance to infection due to Hodgkin's disease; multiple myeloma; cancer treatment with x-rays or drugs; treatment with long-term steroids; bone marrow or organ transplant; kidney failure; Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS);

- lymphoma, leukemia, or other cancers; nephritic syndrome; damaged spleen; or no spleen
- Alaskan Natives or individuals from certain Native American populations

COVERAGE INFORMATION FOR PPV

Coverage of PPV and its administration was added to the Medicare Program on July 1, 1981. Medicare provides coverage of PPV once in a lifetime for all beneficiaries. Medicare may provide additional vaccinations based on risk. Beneficiaries considered to be at high risk may be revaccinated if at least 5 years have passed since the last covered PPV. Revaccination is limited to beneficiaries at the highest risk of serious pneumococcal infection and those likely to have a rapid decline in pneumococcal antibody levels. This group includes individuals with:

- Functional or anatomic asplenia (e.g., sickle cell disease, splenectomy)
- HIV infection
- Leukemia
- Lymphoma
- Hodgkin's disease
- Multiple myeloma
- Generalized malignancy
- Chronic renal failure
- Nephrotic syndrome
- Other conditions associated with immunosuppression such as organ or bone marrow transplantation, and those receiving immunosuppressive chemotherapy

NOTE: Prior to vaccination, physicians should ask beneficiaries if they have been vaccinated with PPV. If patients are uncertain whether they have been vaccinated within the past 5 years, the provider should administer the vaccine. If patients are certain they have been vaccinated within the past 5 years, the vaccine should not be administered.

Coverage of PPV is provided as a Medicare Part B benefit. If the beneficiary receives the service from a Medicare-enrolled provider, the beneficiary will pay nothing (there is no coinsurance or copayment and no deductible for this benefit).

HEPATITIS B VIRUS (HBV) VACCINE

Hepatitis B is caused by a virus that attacks the liver. The virus, which is called Hepatitis B Virus (HBV), can cause lifelong infection, cirrhosis of the liver, liver cancer, liver failure, and death. According to the CDC, an estimated 1.25 million Americans are chronically infected with HBV.

Risk Factors for Hepatitis B Infection

Medicare provides coverage for certain beneficiaries at high or intermediate risk for HBV infection.

High-risk groups for whom vaccination is recommended include:

- Individuals with End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD)
- Individuals with hemophilia who received Factor VIII or IX concentrates
- Clients of institutions for the mentally handicapped
- Persons who live in the same household as an HBV carrier
- Homosexual men
- Illicit injectable drug users

Intermediate groups for whom vaccination is recommended include:

- Staff in institutions for the mentally handicapped
- Workers in health care professions who have frequent contact with blood or blood-derived body fluids during routine work

Exception: *Persons in the above-listed groups would not be considered at high or intermediate risk of contracting HBV if they have laboratory evidence positive for antibodies to HBV (ESRD patients are routinely tested for HBV antibodies as part of their continuing monitoring and therapy).*



COVERAGE INFORMATION FOR HBV

Coverage of the HBV vaccine and its administration was added to the Medicare Program in 1984. Medicare provides payment for the Hepatitis B vaccine and its administration, for beneficiaries at medium to high risk of contracting Hepatitis B, if ordered by a doctor of medicine or osteopathy.

Coverage of the HBV vaccine is provided as a Medicare Part B benefit. The coinsurance or copayment applies after the yearly Medicare Part B deductible has been met.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has developed a variety of educational resources as part of a broad outreach campaign to promote awareness and increase utilization of these preventive benefits.

You can learn more about coverage, billing, coding, and reimbursement of Medicare's preventive services and screenings at www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNGenInfo on the CMS website, or you may obtain a copy of *The Guide to Medicare Preventive Services for Physicians, Providers, Suppliers, and Other Health Care Professionals* from the Medicare Learning Network.

MEDICARE LEARNING NETWORK (MLN)

The Medicare Learning Network (MLN) is the brand name for official CMS educational products and information for Medicare providers. For additional information visit the Medicare Learning Network's web page at www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNGenInfo on the CMS website.

FOR BENEFICIARY-RELATED INFORMATION

The official U.S. Government website for people with Medicare is located on the web at www.medicare.gov, or more information can be obtained by calling 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048.

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Adult Immunizations

